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By-Bernard, Louise

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This address, given at a workshop on distributive education, dealt primarily with the coordination of classroom theories of retail selling with their application in the store. The teacher-coordinator, who is responsible for this step, often has such a full program that he tends to overlook it. The teacher must work with the merchant for an effective coordinating plan, adhere to it, and record the findings for evaluation. He should make more use of the "downtown teacher," someone designated by management to sponsor the student while he is actually working at the store. Thus, the teacher, the sponsor, and management all have a part in this coordination. A well-trained and enthusiastic sponsor can add effectiveness and meaning to classroom learning and, at the same time, improve his own supervisory techniques. He should receive recognition for this task not only from management but also from his colleagues. An active teacher-coordinator will keep up to date on retail activity and change, build up the confidence of management in the program, provide good public relations for the college, and find relevant case studies for the classroom. Coordination may be handled as (1) routine observations at the store, (2) visits with the student to demonstrate on-the-job training, (3) discussions with the sponsor on special techniques needed by the student, or (4) formal conferences with the sponsor on the student's progress. (HH)

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BUSINESS'S BEST SELLER - IT'S CALLED RETAILING

By
Louise Bernard, Consultant
Distributive Education

Space age thinking should not be too difficult for you people who are fortunate enough to be in the beautiful State of Florida where nearby Cape Kennedy lifts you up and away quite frequently these days. President Logan, and his Advisory Committee, have through this workshop duplicated an Apollo 8 launching for Distributive Education. The coordination phase of D. E. which needs attention now, is, in my opinion, the most crucial part of our program. To my knowledge, this is the first workshop of its kind in the nation to concern itself with that part of the D. E. Coordinator's job which determines the success or the failure of the program.

It is a good thing to move out from the world of the classroom in order that we secure a new prospective on business's best seller before the values come into focus. Retailing is and always will be the core of our D. E. program. It provides the most effective laboratory for the student to move out and up. Whether or not it becomes a best seller as a career for the student depends on the wise leadership provided by both the D. E. Teacher-Coordinator and the "downtown" teacher who supervises the work of the student through effective coordination. Whether we keep up with the constant changes in retailing and bring them into our D. E. curriculum determines our effectiveness. These changes can more easily be detected through constant coordination.

Space View of Retailing

What do we see of the wonderful world of retailing when we gaze down from our space ship? We can immediately recognize the retail stores because in them we see the pulsating heart of the community. Here people flow in and out like bees to the honeycomb. This goes on all day and into the night. We see all kinds of people who are attracted to this retail center by advertising, through newspapers, radio, TV, and by word of mouth. The greatest magnet of attraction comes from the common needs for clothing, food and the home. These needs must be met by the average consumer today. This ever changing, vital picture of business's best seller is reflected in window displays, lighting and interior displays, some of which are worthy of an exhibit in a museum. The talents of people who know how to present art, line and design through merchandise well displayed is evident on all sides of Main Street. The fact is that the retail store has put on a new image in recent years. It leads the community in presenting a center for beauty and culture.

Just to gain contrast, mentally block out all the retail stores from a visual area of your community. All that would remain is a rather blank, desolate,

lifeless space, devoid of the life which gives the community sparkle and activity. In fact, your map will look like the recent pictures of the moon. Of course, we do see the factories at the edge of town where they, too, have improved their image a great deal, but even with modern glass fronts and parked cars surrounding the big plant, the only object through the day is the belching smoke from many chimneys. Too often we forget that business's best seller is a people-to-people business. Manufacturing is an automated machine-centered activity.

Retailing The Center Culture

Too seldom we do attempt to present a career in retailing from the point of view that it reflects the culture of our age. We overlook the beautiful store interiors where we can almost trace the history of our country through the different kinds of merchandise so effectively displayed. The harmonious blending of lights with the proper combination of colors and the well placed line that the eye automatically follows attracts attention. The image of retailing presents this cultural approach too often overlooked by our colleagues in guidance who determine the selection of subjects for the students. However, let us not blame them. We have been the ones to fail to sell business's best seller!

People employed in retailing, wholesaling, and in the service fields need to meet customers with a kind of cultural approach. Management is becoming more and more conscious of the need to require a type of education in its employees, which include more general and academic subjects. Now, with automation and all the modern changes that affect our D. E. curriculum every day we should realize and sell the fact that in retailing there are more than eight executives to every rank and file employee. Until a few years ago the ratio was one executive to every nine employees. But this is changed with the opening of so many branch stores and shopping centers.

How and Why Coordination?

Dr. Paul Nystrom, one of the authors of the original George-Deen Act, conceived the idea of bringing theory into practice, by including provisions in the Act for adequate time to carry on the coordination activity. The very name "D. E. Coordinator" implies the act of coordination. Isn't it significant that the word "coordinate" comes immediately after the word "Cooperate" in Webster's dictionary? Some of the definitions of coordinate are equally significant - "Of equal order or importance" - "to bring into proper order or relation" - "to adjust". Long ago Dr. Nystrom saw the fallacy and the danger of including a program of vocational education in a law which, at the same time, would not make provision for seeing that the individual taking the program also have the opportunity of applying it. Now we know that almost anyone can get a job in retailing, but the D. E. student who studies theories of distribution in the classroom remains in orbit until he acquires a launching pad provided by securing a job in distribution. Even then he continues to be

vulnerable until his teacher-coordinator takes the necessary steps to see that he is applying what he is learning in the classroom on the job.

Through the years state supervisors have had difficulty in selling school administrators on the need for allowing time for coordination activities as an integral part of the D. E. program. Dr. Nystrom knew that education for distribution could not properly be learned if it were confined just to the classroom. Let us never forget that provision for high school students taking distributive education was based on the fact that they must have "entered upon employment." The Act itself was primarily for adults already employed in distribution.

Danger in Too Large Enrollment

What happens to this ever-expanding program of distributive education when more and more students crowd into our already filled classrooms? Something has got to give somewhere. The average conscientious coordinator already has a full program, so the one area which seems to be expendable is the time devoted to coordination. Over a thirty year period of experience with the D. E. program we know that it takes about an average of twenty minutes to properly handle the whole area of coordination for each student in the classroom. Now, with the addition of our preparatory programs classes tend to go beyond thirty students. This has become a vulnerable area in certain states where only one coordinator is employed in the school.

Conscientious Coordination

The dictionary definition of "consciousness" reads in part, "Awareness, especially of something within oneself." Psychologists tell us that everyone has an innate need to improve and become outstanding in as many directions as is possible in order to make us a better person. When we become deliberately conscious of wanting to be a better coordinator our entire surroundings and behavior will lead us in that direction. What do we think about consciousness? We know that consciousness drives us toward that part of our D. E. job in which we are most interested; controls the action which makes us do a good job; makes possible the opportunities that open up to us and drives us to our destiny. Therefore, if this workshop can reemphasize and make us conscious of that part of our job dealing with coordination, and how we can improve it, then we will have accomplished a great deal in this one day of meeting together.

Importance of coordination responsibility is accepted or rejected by the individual coordinator. Self-discipline is much harder to accomplish when we are not accountable to someone higher for every move we make. Therefore, the temptation to water down and reduce needed adequate time to spend on coordination is one activity which depends on the conscience of the individual coordinator. Such freedom of action, however, may boomerang unless it is pinned down to a system which shows results.

Following Up on the Coordinator

A division superintendent in Virginia who was very proud of his D. E. program, which had been in existence for some years, took occasion to visit with some of the cooperative store owners. He was certainly dismayed and somewhat shocked to find that certain managers indicated that they had not seen the coordinator come in for a coordination visit during that school session. He realized that they had had a change in coordinators from the previous year. At this point he phoned the D. E. area supervisor and asked him to make an evaluation of the program by conducting a survey of a cross-section of the stores where the D. E. students were employed. The entire State Staff aided the area supervisor in the development of an adequate survey form which had been successfully used in a number of communities for an evaluation requested by the superintendent. We will examine this survey form later in our workshop.

Become a Part of It

Some D. E. coordinators continue to remain in the space ship and, on the periphery instead of becoming involved. We must recognize that there seems to be a false safety in the four walls of the ivory tower of the classroom. Furthermore, we can always justify staying there because there is always plenty to do. We sometimes hesitate to move out into the busy scene of distribution where coordination activity means taking the initiative. Never approach this phase of the job apologetically or with timidity. What you have to offer is as important to that retail store as any other activity. Plan your coordination time effectively, stick to the plan and record the findings in a built-in evaluation. Gratification from a job well done will more than compensate your efforts.

I know that in this workshop the fact that all of you today are present indicates that we have conscientious coordinators who do many of the things I have talked about and will discuss with you in the workshop. This does not mean that we cannot improve and sharpen the tools of coordination. Undoubtedly, many of you will have excellent solutions to the problems which I have implied this morning.

Sponsor Development Program

Coordination techniques can be strengthened by more adequate use of the "downtown teacher." The person who has been designated as the sponsor for the D. E. student should be brought into the picture early in the school year. The appointment of this "downtown teacher" by Management should not be just a casual naming of any person. Encourage management to select a potential leader, one who can benefit from the experience of supervising and training the D. E. student and securing the techniques of supervision along the way. The sponsor should be made to feel important by this appointment. He should be recognized not only by management but by colleagues in this regard. A well trained and enthusiastic sponsor can do much toward making your coordination visits meaningful and effective as far as the classroom training is

concerned. He can also save you a great deal of time. A suggested sponsor training calendar, together with a discussion of the on-the-job training responsibilities will be considered in the workshop. There must be some common points presented to both the merchant and the sponsor in order to bring an enthusiastic and cooperative result.

Maintaining Professional Know How

Like young people who enter the field of retailing, we all need to reflect the enthusiasm, sparkle and vitality of this exciting craft we represent. Dr. William B. Logan, Dr. Leroy Buckner and Miss Gale Trapnell are perfect examples of people who have been in this field for years and who present the proper image of outstanding distributive educators.

In any workshop dealing with Distributive Education, we need to consider how we can maintain our own involvement in order to maintain professional know how. We can read the very latest professional and technical data in our field. We can apply what we read in advertisement, on TV and trade journals. We can participate in workshops and conferences like the one today, but the most important technique is constantly to sharpen the tools of coordination by doing the job. What we teach in the classroom remains theory until we see it applied in practice and evaluate our effectiveness as a teacher.

Aside from its effect on the program what does the coordination activity do for the coordinator?

1. It keeps him close to the retail activity and constant changes going on.
2. Builds confidence in himself.
3. Builds confidence in management which grows with the coordination activity itself.
4. Builds confidence in the D. E. student and in the coordinator.
5. Becomes a show window for the school.
6. Provides freedom for being out on the town, yet in a controlled situation.
7. Provides sources of finding new and different merchandise as well as techniques.
8. Invites participation as a consultant to management.
9. Provides a check on the rate of time needed to cover the curricula.
10. Provides case studies for class discussion.
11. Creates anticipation by students in a natural way whereby the coordinator can recognize students accomplishments in the classroom.

Kinds of Coordination Visits

There are different kinds of coordination visits that may be used depending on the situation:

1. Routine observation visits without involving student or sponsor. This gives a sense of stability to the program and the student.

2. A visit with the student where on-the-job training is given in order to expand and demonstrate what was presented in the classroom.

3. A visit with the training sponsor to ask cooperation in giving student special techniques needed on the job.

4. Periodic formal conferences with the training sponsor during which a progress report or rating of the student is taken up.

Today, we have taken a very significant phase of the coordinator's job, looked at certain segments of it and hope we will come out with some improved techniques. Each person here is a satellite deciding on his course and, we hope his target, so let's up, up and away!

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